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**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**  
**INFORMATION SERVICE**

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

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**NEW RECORD SET FOR PUBLIC USE OF NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES IN 1954**

National wildlife refuges continued to play an increasingly important part in the Nation's recreational picture during 1954 when a record-breaking total of 5,202,260 persons visited the areas, Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay announced today.

This public use of refuge areas in 1954 represents an increase of more than 11 percent over the 1953 record of 4,686,909 visitors.

Nearly one-third, or 1,612,189 of the 1954 visitors, used the refuges for fishing. Although public fishing was limited over much of the South and Southwest because of drought conditions, total fishing use on all areas was increased by nearly 200,000. The Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi in particular suffered because of this drought factor, reporting only 1,435 visitors for fishing use in 1954 against 14,515 in 1953.

Public waterfowl hunting was permitted on parts of 32 refuges in the United States; upland and big game hunting was allowed on parts of 23 others. This amounted to 361,366 visitor-days for all types of hunting.

Opportunities were also afforded for picnicking, swimming, and wildlife observations. These, together with business and official use, made a total of 3,228,705 visitor-days.

The Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in southwest Oklahoma and the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in southern Illinois, again led all other areas in greatest public use, with the increase in each case exceeding 100,000 persons. In 1954 the Wichita Refuge had 852,316 visitors compared with 742,047 in 1953. Crab Orchard recorded 864,300 visitors in 1954; 714,240 in 1953.

Other refuges reporting a marked increase in public use were Medicine Lake in Montana, Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge in Oregon, Sheldon Antelope Refuge in Nevada, Bitter Lake in New Mexico, Hagerman in Texas, Crescent Lake in Nebraska, Swan Lake in Missouri, Union Slough in Iowa, Sanibel and other Florida islands in Florida, and Montezuma in New York.

Public use figures for the Shiawassee Refuge in central Michigan were recorded for the first time in 1954. More than 11,000 persons made use of this new waterfowl refuge.

As an important part of its over-all program, the Fish and Wildlife Service administers 272 national wildlife refuges in the continental United States, Alaska,

Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. These refuges are managed on a multiple-use basis, insofar as this can be accomplished without defeating the primary objective for which each was established. This has permitted increased public use of refuges for recreational purposes.

In the broadest sense, these refuges make their greatest contribution to the Nation's recreation in the production and protection of wildlife, particularly migratory waterfowl, in order to insure the perpetuation of the sport of wildfowling for several million hunters. The more tangible contributions the refuges make to recreation are the facilities available for fishing, camping, boating, picnicking, photography, nature study, and related uses.

On virtually all refuges, except during periods of waterfowl concentration, fishing is permitted in accordance with State laws and regulation. On a few refuges, which are large enough to accommodate limited hunting, the Service, in cooperation with State Conservation Departments, has permitted public shooting on small portions of the areas.

Recreational facilities have been established, developed, and maintained on numerous refuge areas. On areas which lend themselves to recreational uses without involved development and construction, the facilities are provided by the Service. On others, the recreational facilities are developed and operated either in cooperation with local governmental or civic groups or by commercial concessioners.

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